

# UN climate change report to warn of 'severe, pervasive' effects of global warming

*Flooding, dangerous heatwaves, ill health and violent conflicts among likely risks if the world keeps burning fossil fuels at current rates, IPCC expected to say*



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**By Emily Gosden: 01 Nov 2014**

The world is on course to experience "severe and pervasive" negative impacts from climate change unless it takes rapid action to slash its greenhouse gas emissions, a major UN report is expected to warn on Sunday.

Flooding, dangerous heatwaves, ill health and violent conflicts are among the likely risks if temperatures exceed 2C above pre-industrial levels, the report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will say.

Yet on current trends, continued burning of fossil fuels could see temperature increases of between 3.7C and 4.8C by the end of the century, the report warns, according to a draft seen by the Telegraph.

Warming beyond 4C would likely result in "substantial species extinction, large risks to global and regional food security, impacts on normal human activities".

The final document, which has been agreed line-by-line by international government officials at a summit in Copenhagen over the past week, is intended to provide the clearest and most concise summary yet of the widely-agreed scientific evidence on climate change.

It is a "synthesis" document bringing together the conclusions of three major IPCC studies issued over the past year into the science, impacts and ways of tackling climate change.

It is designed to act as a guide for policymakers ahead of a year of intense political negotiations on how to tackle climate change, culminating in a crunch summit in Paris next year where an international deal on curbing emissions is due to be signed.

Yet despite the IPCC's stark warnings, there is widespread agreement from climate change activists, sceptics and, privately, UK Government officials, that the summit in Paris is unlikely to achieve a legally-binding deal that will curb warming to the 2C level.

Doing so would require a drastic overhaul of global energy systems in order to cut emissions by between 40pc and 70pc from 2010 levels by 2050.

The proportion of energy sourced from low-carbon sources such as wind farms, solar power and nuclear reactors would have to triple or nearly quadruple, the draft says.

The expansion of such technologies has already proved controversial in the UK.

Owen Paterson, the former environment secretary, has called for the UK's Climate Change Act, which imposes tough unilateral emissions-reductions goals, to be suspended until other countries agree to similar measures.

Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the UN IPCC, opened the Copenhagen summit by acknowledging the "seeming hopelessness of addressing climate change" but imploring policymakers to "avoid being overcome" by it.

"It is not hopeless," he said, calling on governments to make decisions "informed by the science".

Richard Black, director of the Energy & Climate Intelligence Unit, said the key question for those finalising the IPCC report was "what to say about the elephant in the room... that if the computer model projections are right, keeping global warming below 2C basically means ending fossil fuel use well before today's children start drawing their pensions".

The UK Government has pushed for the wording of the report to be strengthened to make crystal clear the emissions cuts that would be needed to hit the 2C target, the risks of delaying action and also the "co-benefits", such as improved air quality.

These facts must not be "hidden in supporting text", according to a UK submission seen by website Responding To Climate Change.

But countries including Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, have demanded the text should also acknowledge the negative economic effects of abandoning fossil fuels.

Benny Peiser, of the climate-sceptic Global Warming Policy Foundation, said the IPCC report contents would not translate to agreement on a deal in Paris.

"On the science there is no real discrepancy: the governments agree we should make sure warming isn't more than 2C. But when it really comes to caps on their CO2 emissions there is simply no chance of an agreement whatsoever," he said.

"There are a number of countries that simply can't afford to forgo the cheap energy they are sitting on, countries like India and China. They will make sure they can use the cheap fossil fuels they have under their feet."

Bob Ward, policy director at the LSE's Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change, said the report made clear it was "still technically possible to avoid dangerous climate change", but that required emissions reductions would "only be possible if action starts immediately".

"If strong action is not well underway by 2020, the chance of avoiding dangerous climate change will be very small, if indeed possible at all," he said.

"I think there will be an international agreement in Paris next year, but the commitments by individual countries to cut emissions will not be consistent with the goal of avoiding global warming of more than 2C.

"World leaders may wait until there is even more evidence of the damaging impacts of climate change before they accelerate action to cut emissions, but any further delay will increase the magnitude of the risks the world faces."

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